

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

Misnamed 'PCEasy' only worth avoiding

I have to hand it to the makers of "PCEasy," TranSec Systems of Delray Beach, Fla., for trying to pick a catchy name for their product. After all, "WordPerfect," the popular word processing program, was certainly helped by its good name. And other personal computer products such as "First Choice," "Fancy Font," "PowerBase," and dozens of others have successfully benefited from well-chosen names.

In all those cases, however, the names accurately reflect some aspect of the product. In the case of the PCEasy program, to truly reflect the product it should have been named instead "PCTedious."

Actually, here are some other names for the \$79.95 program that would be just as accurate: "PCLaborious," "PCWearisome" or "PCWaste-of-Time."

Why am I being so hard on the product? Mainly because it is such a waste of time. After taking the trouble to obtain a review copy from the publisher, installing it on my PC, struggling for over two hours to understand the poor documentation, reading and rereading sections that are utterly incomprehensible, and after trying repeatedly to perform simple actions that the program makes terribly complicated, I ended up no better off than before I began.

Here are some of the claims made in the advertisements for PCEasy, along with my reactions:

✓ "Never forget a file name again. With PCEasy's 32 character names you can't forget. With meaningful file names like 'Letter to Jim Smith 5/9/86' instead of 'Ltrjsmth.596' you won't forget either." In theory, that's true. If you could easily rename your files like this and use them with the same degree of flexibility as the original names, it would be great. But the program doesn't deliver. Renaming files involves convoluted procedure that merely adds an extended description to the existing name. You don't actually rename the file

as the advertising implies.

✓ "PCEasy introduces automatic file organization. You can forget about directories and having to sort your files or look at 'trees.' Sorting and organization are natural and automatic." I never did figure out how to specify directories

or have specific categories of files listed. I suspect that the program does provide such capability, and perhaps somewhere buried in their documentation is the answer, but I gave up before finding it.

✓ "It's easy to learn... Why not make your life easy?" I've never, in 20 years of working with mainframes, mini-

computers and personal computers, encountered a program that aimed to do so little and then made it so difficult to learn how to do it. Would you believe that the manual for PCEasy is more than 100 pages long, even though its main feature is just renaming files?

About the only positive thing I can say is that the publisher provides a 30-day money-back guarantee.

Happily, another program is available that does a better job and is less expensive than PCEasy.

Last week in this column, I reviewed "Filenotes," a \$41.95 program from Practical Peripherals of Westlake Village, Calif., that allows you to set up an "index card" within on your screen that contains additional information about each file on your hard disk. The program can be accessed even in the middle of another program.

Up to 300 cards can be listed for any one directory. Each index card can contain a long 160-character description of the file, so you're not limited to the 32-character limitation of PCEasy.

Filenotes is a good buy, and so handy to use that you'll probably use it every day if you have dozens or hundreds of files stored on your IBM PC or PC-compatible computer. I'm happy to recommend it to you, and with equal vigor recommend that you steer clear of the hard-to-use program, PCEasy.



Segal

Hillel Segal is an independent computer consultant who serves as an expert witness for computer-related litigation. He can be reached at The Association of Computer Users, P.O. Box 9003, Boulder